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49 Degrees

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The pandemic has created an interesting dynamic for the entire sports industry. Throughout this journey, the staff at 49 Degrees has been collaborating with various athletics departments on ways to assist with planning for the upcoming sports seasons. While we realize the exact context (fans, no fans, capacity, etc.) is unknown and will vary by location, we have been working on measures to help athletics departments think through planning of incorporating guidelines and creating confidence within their facilities.

Creating confidence with a clean, safe experience that also aligns with building the brand should become the focus. The flow of fans in the stadiums has to be thought through and controlled in order to be able to execute the social distancing guidelines. This holds true both in terms of fans flowing into the gates and once they are in the stadium. With inconsistencies as to what those guidelines are, the opinions of so many, being able to handle the major elements with clear and concise communication will be paramount. There is no doubt that there are many questions associated with this and more questions come to mind hourly.

Will fans be allowed? What will be the capacity if fans are allowed? How do we keep fans following social distancing requirements at the entry gates? How do we keep the flow of traffic manageable? Will health checks be required; how does that apply and where are those locations set up? How will fans exit the

stadium? How is staff protected? Will there be concessions? If so, what is the best way the concession stands should be set up?

We believe all of these scenarios can happen cost effectively for long or short term use and branded appropriately. Doing so will create confidence for all that attend the games. The many unknowns of this fluid situation requires planning for a multitude of scenarios. We are certain every athletics department is dealing with the various scenarios and planning for all at a very high level. At the end of the day, planning for the safest possible solution will create confidence and produce the best results. We look forward to kick-off in the fall!



Barb Kowal

CoSIDA

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When the sports world stopped abruptly in mid-March, CoSIDA and our members did not.

Instead, we watched the athletics communicators redouble efforts and deliver a mix of innovative and compelling storytelling, collaborate extensively with campus leaders, create virtual access to student-athletes and coaches and deliver unique content across all communications platforms. We are proud of these extraordinary efforts of our members in uncertain times.

In situations where there is no rulebook on what to do next, organizations and brands need to be agile enough to manage and adapt to unexpected change at a moment's notice. That was our challenge at CoSIDA, and that also was our response.

CoSIDA already had the framework/experience of reaching members digitally through monthly podcasts and webinars. When the pandemic hit, we quickly sprang into action to do more and advocate for our members, creating a Listening and Leading webinar series to take a look at the issues and challenges facing us.

We amplified our communications and messaging, knowing that you can NEVER over-communicate in a time like this. We crafted our messages so everyone knows why we are doing what we are doing – and how we are going to help our athletics communicators through these uncharted times.

On March 24, we held the first webinar across all of college athletics addressing our new reality when hundreds of CoSIDA members joined us for our Virtual Town Hall: Navigating Difficult Challenges in Uncertain Times.

It was the first of 10 webinars CoSIDA has hosted through May 21. These webinars (also on-demand) focused on mental health support/fear of the unknown with noted sports psychologist Dr. Jarrod Spencer, content creation, working from home, reputation management, mentorship, and the expanding and changing roles of SIDs in these challenging times.

In mid-March, we also introduced CoSIDA Coffee Shop informal Zoom hangout chats to get the pulse of our membership. Guided by CoSIDA staffers, there is no set agenda as we talk about a variety of topics. Through May, we will have hosted 40 of these sessions for hundreds of our members.

Additionally, we've delved deeply into the analysis and data from our compensation and salary survey (conducted in partnership with Athlete Viewpoint). Through webinars, videos, infographics showing the value, strengths and skill sets of SIDs, small-group discussions and the work of our CoSIDA Advocacy Committee, we are sharing the data, offering our members strategies to define their value and contributions and how to position themselves as key contributors and strategic thinkers.

All this while our five-person staff shifted our Convention plans to a virtual 2020 event. To combat work from home/virtual fatigue, we are spreading our programming (live and recorded) across three weeks in June, offering 16 sessions, divisional day and special leadership programming.

This has been an important time to listen to our members, be empathetic in our messaging and focus on what our industry needs now.